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ABSTRACT

Examining the impact of news on people's knowledge about and favorableness of opinion toward six foreign countries, a study conducted telephone interviews with 374 adult residents in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, during November 1984. The nations selected for study included three developed countries (Britain, the Soviet Union, and Japan) and three developing countries (Mexico, India, and Venezuela). Knowledge about the countries was measured by asking respondents to identify the capital and estimate the population and income per person for each country. Respondents were also given the name of each country's political leader and were asked to name that leader's country. Favorableness of opinion was assessed by asking respondents to rate each country on a scale of zero to 100, with zero representing an extremely unfavorable opinion. News orientation variables included traditional exposure items and measures of attention to news. Results indicated that individuals acquire knowledge about the characteristics of developing and developed countries from news in cosmopolitan print media, and from attention to news. Furthermore, data showed that an individual's attention to news about developed countries may contribute to more favorable impressions of them. Results provided evidence consistent with both the optimistic view (media enhances audiences' understanding of nations) and the pessimistic view (audiences acquire negative attitudes from news about developing countries) of news impact on audience knowledge. (Seven tables of data are included, and three pages of footnotes and 35 references are appended.) (MM)

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The News Media and Audience Images of Foreign Countries: Optimism and Pessimism

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The News Media and Audience Images of Foreign Countries:

Optimism and Pessimism

This study examined the possible impact of different orientations to news on people's knowledge about and favorableness of opinion toward six foreign countries. Data were collected in a survey of 374 residents of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, during the Fall of 1984. Correlational analyses indicated that among individual respondents, cosmopolitan media exposure and attention to news about countries related positively with knowledge of countries. Additional analysis suggested that the knowledge effects of cosmopolitan media exposure at times occurred primarily among relatively educated respondents. Analyses of aggregate data supported the knowledge-gap hypothesis for news about countries. Among individual respondents, attention to news about foreign countries generally covaried with favorable opinions of countries. Theoretical implications of the findings, and their relevance to demands for a new world information order, are discussed.

The News Media and Audience Images of Foreign Countries:

Optimism and Pessimism

Discussions of international news historically have reflected both optimism and pessimism regarding the role of the mass media in world affairs. For example, a traditional and optimistic view has emphasized the capacity of the media to enhance audiences' understanding of nations. Many studies of international news reflect this perspective. An early example was an International Press Institute (1953) investigation in which media professionals collaborated with researchers. In a Mass Media Declaration, member nations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization endorsed a more recent expression of this view (Richstad and Anderson, 1981: 446-447). On the other hand, critics often assert that the United States media provide imbalanced and negative images of foreign nations, particularly those of the Third World (see the discussions in Richstad & Anderson, 1981; Stevenson & Cole, 1984). This pessimistic view, around which much of the debate about demands for a new world information order evolved during the past decade, implies that audiences will acquire negative attitudes from news about developing countries. Claims for any such effects have depended largely on assumptions rather than on empirical evidence. Available evidence concerning world news primarily consists of studies of international news content that do not warrant conclusions about media effects (see Golding & Murdock, 1978: 350; McQuail, 1981: 273).

The present study examined these and related issues, using survey data. It focused primarily on the association of various orientations to news (cf. McLeod & McDonald, 1985), the extent to which people expose themselves and attend to news, with two types of dependent variables, knowledge about and perceptions of favorableness toward a variety of

developed and developing nations.

Background

Possible News Effects on Knowledge

The optimistic idea discussed above implies that the mass media will contribute to audience knowledge about foreign countries. The research literature contains a few, mostly scattered, suggestions that people learn about international news topics, if not about characteristics of countries, from the news media. These studies all used the unit of analysis of the individual survey respondent. An early study by Robinson (1967) used data from Detroit and found that media exposure was related to knowledge of international affairs. In another Michigan community, Korzenny, del Toro, and Gaudino (1987) reported that exposure to international news in regional newspapers, but not to world news in national newspapers, was associated with knowledge of international news. In a Wisconsin study, exposure to cosmopolitan media (i.e., newsmagazines and newspapers containing substantial amounts of world-affairs news) correlated with knowledge of leaders of countries (McNelly, Rush, & Bishop, 1968). Education, however, appeared to be a more-important predictor. On the other hand, a survey in an urban area of Venezuela, a country whose media depend heavily on North American news agencies, yielded no evidence that international news exposure contributed to knowledge of characteristics of any of a variety of developing and developed nations (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986). These characteristics included population, per-capita wealth, average life expectancy, and, for certain countries, bordering nations.

Clearly, the existence of mediated information about a foreign country is a necessary condition for audiences to obtain knowledge from news. The new world information order debate has featured allegations that news about

the Third World is underrepresented in news reports in the West (Masmoudi, 1979), and some evidence supports this claim, at least with reference to U.S. media. An analysis of network television news from 1972 to 1981 indicated more coverage of developing than of developed countries, but the former received less coverage in relation to total population and number of countries (Larson, 1984). A study of U. S. news agency stories and their use by small newspapers indicated that although there was a roughly even balance in number of stories between developed and developing countries, this balance was not proportional to the greater population and number of countries in the Third World (Wilhoit & Weaver, 1983). These content-analytic studies suggest that an individual U.S. resident's exposure to news may be correlated positively with her or his knowledge of developed nations only. They also suggest that the amount of coverage received by a country in U.S. news media may covary positively with average audience knowledge levels about the nation.

Other optimistic and pessimistic hypotheses concerning the news media and knowledge of countries have somewhat different origins. These involve the degree to which members of different social groups will learn from world news. Some research indicates that exposure to cosmopolitan media may produce a particularly marked information gain about foreign leaders among persons with relatively little education (McNelly, Rush, & Bishop, 1968), an optimistic idea for anyone interested in informing the uninformed. On the other hand, the original knowledge-gap hypothesis (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970) pessimistically predicted that the main beneficiaries of an increase in mediated public-affairs information within a social system will be relatively educated (i.e., already knowledgeable) persons. One implication of knowledge-gap idea, according to Tichenor,

Donohue, and Olien (1970), is that cross-sectional correlations between education and knowledge about a public-affairs subject will be greater for issues that receive more news coverage. Pessimists might also argue that the results of these two studies are not contradictory. Individual-level exposure variables are quite different from the social-system level concept of information availability developed in the knowledge-gap literature. Even if exposure itself has especially strong effects on less-educated persons, an increase in the amount of world news available to society might benefit well-educated persons disproportionately because the educated are exposed to the information to a much greater degree than are the less-educated. This interpretation would be suggested if news exposure covaried more strongly with country knowledge among the less-educated, and if education were associated especially with knowledge about countries that receive relatively heavy media coverage.

Possible News Effects on Opinions about Countries

The research literature again contains a few indications of possible links between news exposure and an individual's attitudes toward nations. In the aforementioned Michigan survey, exposure to international news in national newspapers such as the New York Times was associated with a relatively favorable attitude toward the Third World (Korzenny, del Toro, & Gaudino, 1987). The urban Venezuelan survey showed exposure to international news to be significantly related to favorable images of developing as well as developed nations (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986). Descriptive data from a survey of the American public indicated that people who are highly attentive to world news have more-favorable feelings toward foreign countries generally, including those of the Third World, than do less attentive persons (Rielly, 1979, p. 18). Most of these findings fit

the notion that favorable affect can result from sheer amount of exposure (Chaffee & Miyo, 1983; Joyce, 1973; Zajonc, 1968). An optimist might infer, then, a general hypothesis that exposure to news will contribute directly to more-favorable feelings toward foreign countries in general.

Other studies suggest that knowledge itself about a country might make attitudes toward it more favorable. McNelly & Izcaray (1986), using the unit of analysis of the individual survey respondent, reported evidence from Venezuela that knowledge about several developed and developing countries covaried with more favorable feelings toward the countries. In addition, earlier studies suggest that the less Americans, in the aggregate, know about foreign nationalities, the more likely they are to feel negatively toward them (cited in Hero, 1959: 13). These studies imply, optimistically, that the impact of exposure on feelings might also operate indirectly through knowledge, among both individuals and groups.

A pessimistic view relates primarily to developing countries. It assumes that news about such countries is negative and that therefore audiences will develop negative impressions of them. Content analyses have not produced clear-cut support on a worldwide basis for the rhetorical assaults on western-dominated news channels (Altheide, 1984; Sreberny-Mohammedi et al., 1985; Stevenson & Shaw, 1984). More pessimistically, however, analyses of media content within the United States have yielded some evidence that news concerning Third-World nations is relatively negative. On U.S. network television news from 1972 to 1981, there was disporportionately more crisis reporting from developing countries (Larson, 1984). A study of U.S. news agency stories and their use by small newspapers produced evidence of a relatively greater emphasis on violent conflict in Third World countries as compared with First World nations

(Wilhoit & Weaver, 1983). These studies perhaps suggest, but stop well short of demonstrating, that U.S. news audiences will acquire negative images of Third-World countries from news.

Study Objectives

This study examined several predictions arising from previous research and from theoretical considerations. Three pertained to knowledge of countries and concerned individual respondents. These included whether a person's news exposure and attention relate positively with her or his knowledge about a variety of countries, and whether an individual's exposure and attention covary with knowledge of developed societies only. It also examined the possible interactive effect of education and cosmopolitan media exposure on knowledge about various developed and developing countries. Two other questions about country knowledge used aggregate data, with countries representing the unit of analysis. One concerned whether level of coverage about a nation is associated positively with mean knowledge of it. A second, suggested by the knowledge gap hypothesis, is whether education becomes a stronger predictor of knowledge as coverage of a country increases.

Three individual-level hypotheses about affect toward countries were tested. One was whether a respondent's news exposure and attention relate positively with favorable perceptions toward a variety of individual nations, and the second concerned whether these news orientations covary negatively with favorableness toward developing countries. Whether a person's knowledge of a country is associated with positive affect toward it also was tested. A fourth hypothesis, examined at the unit of analysis of the country, involved whether mean knowledge of a country is correlated positively with average favorableness toward it.

Method

Data for the present study were gathered by telephone interviews with 374 adult residents of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, during November 1984. The county is the home of the University of Alabama. Although not representative of the entire U.S. population, it contains a diverse population, including large numbers of college-educated professionals, blue-collar workers, and farmers. A stage-two, random-digit dialing procedure was used. Interviewers, including students in a graduate research methods class and employees of the Capstone Poll at the University of Alabama, used a randomized grid sheet to select respondents within households. The response rate, calculated by dividing the number of completed interviews by the number of eligible household contacts, was 64%.

Dependent variables in the study included knowledge about and favorableness of opinion toward individual countries. Knowledge was measured by asking respondents to identify the capitals of and to estimate the population and income per person in six countries selected to provide geographic and political diversity. The nations selected included three developed nations: Britain (defined for respondents as England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), the Soviet Union, and Japan. Three developing nations (Mexico, India, and Venezuela) also were included. To provide reference points, respondents were told the U.S. population and per-capita gross national product. Knowledge about capital cities, per-capita wealth and population was measured because these are standard ways of describing countries.[1] Respondents also were given the name of the political leaders of the six countries (information often included in news) and were asked to name the country of each leader (cf. McNelly, Rush, & Bishop, 1968). Respondents received a code of 1 for a correct answer for each capital and

leader, and those with incorrect answers received a 0. For each population and income-per-person item, the respondent's estimate was divided by the figure for the country, as provided in a contemporary source (Central Intelligence Agency, 1983). If the estimate was less than the correct figure, the ratio was used as a proportion-of-accuracy figure; if the estimate exceeded the correct figure, its inverse was used. All ratios ranged from 0 to 1. Therefore, each respondent received a knowledge score for each country ranging from 0 to 4 (leader + capital + population + income per person). Because of the possibility that the different knowledge measures reflect empirically different types of knowledge, analyses were performed to examine whether each form of knowledge item (capital, leader, population, wealth) performs similarly with relation to other variables. This was done by summing all measures of the same type of item, across the six countries, and analyzing relationships between the resulting indices and independent variables used in the study.

Favorableness of opinion was assessed by asking respondents to rate each country on a scale of 0 to 100. A 0 represented an extremely unfavorable general opinion and a 100 a very favorable opinion. This measure is an adaption to telephone survey research of the similar "feeling thermometer" used for years by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the Gallup Organization to measure affective perceptions about countries in personal interviews (e.g., Rielly, 1979; 1987).

The independent variables included four socio-demographics: age, sex, education, and income. Age was measured in years. For our sex measure, females received a 1 and males a 0. For our measure of education, a code corresponding to the number of years completed was used for persons

reporting 0 to 12 years of schooling. Persons reporting junior college or trade school as their highest educational level received a 13. Respondents reporting at least one year of college received a 14, those reporting some graduate school or law school received a 15, and those with doctorates or law degrees received a 16. Examination of a scatterplot of the education-income relationship indicated that our coding scheme did not introduce nonlinearity into our education measure. Income was coded into discrete categories, reflecting a respondent's self-reported income family bracket, ranging from 1 (under $10,000 per year) to 6 (more than $50,000 per year).

The news orientation variables included both traditional exposure items and measures of attention to news. The exposure items consisted of the number of days per week a respondent reported reading a newspaper and the number of days a week of reported television news and network television news viewership. Respondents were questioned concerning which newspapers and newsmagazines they read, and a measure of cosmopolitan media exposure (McNelly, Rush, & Bishop, 1968) was constructed from these responses. A respondent received a 1 if she or he reported regularly reading either Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, or a cosmopolitan newspaper. For purposes of our study, cosmopolitan newspapers included The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Atlanta Constitution, the Christian Science Monitor, and the Wall Street Journal. An news attention index for each country was constructed by summing responses to survey items that measured a person's attention to news about foreign countries generally, to news about the relations between the U.S. and other nations, and to news about the specific country. Each individual item used a 0-to-100 scale, with high numbers representing high attention levels. Therefore, high scores on an index, which used a 0-to-300 scale, indicated

high attention levels.

We assumed a causal order among the variables that is similar to models used or implied in previous research concerning the impact of mass communication upon audience public-affairs knowledge and attitudes (e.g., Becker & Whitney, 1980; McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Socio-demographics were considered logically prior to everything else, and the news orientations, as a block, were introduced hierarchically on top of them. Although our knowledge measures were used as dependent variables, knowledge may influence favorableness of opinion. This possible impact was examined with controls for the demographics and the news orientations. Of course, the assumed causal order (from socio-demographics to news orientations to knowledge to favorableness) may be too simplistic. For example, knowledge may may be necessary for audiences to form favorable or unfavorable impressions about nations, as we assumed, but these impressions may in turn influence the degree to which people acquire additional knowledge. Therefore, additional analyses examined the possible impact of any such misspecification.

In an examination of the interaction of education and cosmopolitan media exposure in predicting knowledge about each country, both independent variables were standardized and multiplied. The interaction term then was tested hierarchically with controls for the four socio-demographics and the four news orientations.

We tested the cross-sectional implication of the knowledge gap hypothesis by examining the rank-order correlation between measures of news coverage of a country and the zero-order, linear association of education with knowledge for the nation. Pasadeos' (1984) study of coverage of individual nations by U.S. newsmagazines from 1973 through 1980 and

Larson's (1984) study of coverage of nations on U.S. network television news from 1972 to 1981 provided an indication of how much coverage the six countries had received prior to this survey.[2] We also used these two sets of data to examine by rank-order correlation whether level of coverage covaried with average knowledge level among respondents about the six countries. The relationship between mean knowledge of and favorableness toward the six countries in the sample also was examined with rank-order correlation.

Means were substituted for all missing data in the knowledge analyses. A "don't know" was coded as a 0 on the knowledge items, but it was counted as missing for the opinion measures. Only respondents expressing an opinion about a country were included in favorableness analyses, but means were substituted for missing data in the independent variables. For each knowledge dependent variable, the final sample size was 374. For the opinion variables, sample sizes ranged from 334 to 349.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The accuracy of responses to the knowledge items varied across composite scores for nations. Table 1 contains average knowledge scores about each of the six countries, on a scale of 0 to 4. The respondents knew the most about Britain and the least about Venezuela. Table 1 also contains average opinion ratings indicating that the respondents had the most-favorable opinions of Great Britain and the least-favorable impressions of the Soviet Union, among the six countries. In a 1986 national survey in which five of these countries, excluding Venezuela, were rated on a similar scale, the rank order of the five was identical, and mean rankings were similar (Rielly, 1987, p. 18).

Table 1 About Here

Table 2 contains descriptive statistics for the independent variables. It indicates that the average age of respondents was about 41, and about 54 percent were female. An examination of response frequencies (not shown) showed that about 56 percent of respondents reported at least some education beyond the high school level. The average respondent was exposed to television news on more days than to a newspaper, according to data in Table 1, and only about one in three regularly read a cosmopolitan medium. The great majority of these read newsmagazines, not cosmopolitan newspapers. Respondents paid the most attention to news about the Soviet Union and the least to news about Venezuela.

Table 2 About Here

Table 3 contains the correlation matrix for the independent variables, at the level of analysis of the individual respondent. It indicates that bicollinearity generally was modest to moderate among the variables. The strongest associations occurred between television news and network news exposure (.52), family income and education (.40), and between age and education (-.35).

Table 3 About Here

Validation of Knowledge Dependent Variables

Correlations, rather than standardized regression coefficients, are reported for all analyses to emphasize that these cross-sectional data cannot provide unambiguous evidence of the forms of causation present. Table 4 contains the individual-level partial correlations between summed

indices for the six countries reflecting each type of knowledge dependent variable (leader, capital, population, wealth) and the independent variables. The attention measure used here consisted of the sum of eight items reflecting attention to news about other countries, to news involving the U.S. and other nations, and to news about the six nations used in this study. These correlations indicated to us that the four knowledge types behaved relatively similarly with reference to the news orientations. This, along with internal-consistency analyses suggesting that deleting certain components of the indices of country knowledge would not improve measurement,[3] supported use of the four-item knowledge measures for each country. The means and standard deviations for the indices reflecting different types of knowledge, summed across all six countries and measured a scale of 0 to 6, were: knowledge of leaders, $\underline{X} = 2.83$, $\underline{SD} = 1.88$; knowledge of capitals $\underline{X} = 2.39$, $\underline{SD} = 2.01$; knowledge of per-capita wealth, $\underline{X} = 2.58$, $\underline{SD} = 1.36$; knowledge of population, $\underline{X} = 1.97$, $\underline{SD} = 1.44$.

Table 4 About Here

Knowledge Dependent Variables

The results of data analyses involving country knowledge at the unit of analysis of the individual survey respondent appear in Tables 5 and 6. An apportionment of explained variation according to the assumed causal model for country knowledge is included in Table 5. As a group, the socio-demographics were much more strongly predictive of knowledge than were the news orientations. Table 6 contains the correlations of the independent variables with knowledge about countries. These data are consistent with hypotheses that people learn about both developed and developing countries through exposure to cosmopolitan media and by attending to news about

countries, but the data contain little evidence that the other news orientations have such an effect.

The top row for each country in Table 6 contains the zero-order associations of the independent variables with knowledge. If these become insignificant after controls are added, the data suggest that any association present is either spurious or indirect (i.e., operates through other variables). The second row, for each country, contains partial correlations following controls for socio-demographics. To the extent that the causal model assumed earlier is accurate and complete, these indicate the degree of the total impact, direct and indirect (e.g., through the news orientations), of the socio-demographics upon knowledge. They also indicate whether any zero-order association between a news orientation and knowledge measure is spuriously produced by demographic differences among respondents. The bottom row for each country contains partial correlations between independent variables and knowledge, with controls for all other independent variables. This row indicates the direct association between independent and dependent variables, with all other measures held constant. To the extent that the assumed causal model is accurate, these suggest how much any causal impact of the socio-demographics operates indirectly through the news orientations. They also provide evidence whether a significant association between a news orientation in row 2 is direct or spurious and-or indirect (i.e., operates through other news orientations).

Tables 5 and 6 About Here

The results involving the socio-demographics generally were similar across countries. Most of the zero-order correlations between age and knowledge dropped below significance following controls for other socio-

demographics. Evidently, the association of age with knowledge largely reflected educational differences among different age groups. Males knew more than females about all nations except India, regardless of controls. No matter what was controlled, education and income covaried positively with knowledge of all countries. The associations of education with knowledge, however, generally dropped somewhat after controls for the news variables, suggesting that a portion of the impact of education may have been indirect.

The news orientations performed a little less consistently. Any significant correlation between newspaper exposure or network television news exposure and knowledge disappeared after controls for other variables, implying that the original correlations were spurious. Cosmopolitan media exposure and news attention covaried significantly for all countries, regardless of controls. On the other hand, television news exposure was associated with less knowledge of Mexico, Britain, and India; and it was not correlated with knowledge of Japan, the Soviet Union, or Venezuela. The three significant associations involving television news exposure became significant only after controls for other variables, indicating a suppression effect (Cohen & Cohen, 1983, pp. 94-95).

Unlike previous research, the present study contained no evidence that the less-educated obtain more knowledge from exposure to cosmopolitan media than do relatively educated persons. The interaction of education and cosmopolitan media exposure (not shown) attained significance for only knowledge about Japan (partial $\underline{r} = .10$, two-tailed $\underline{p} < .05$, d.f. = 363) and about India (partial $\underline{r} = .17$; two-tailed $\underline{p} < .05$, d. f. = 363). These positive correlations indicate that the association of cosmopolitan media exposure with knowledge about these countries increased as education rose.

Because of the possibility that the causal model assumed here was too simplistic, additional partial correlations (not shown) were calculated. Even if knowledge is a necessary condition for favorableness, favorableness in return may affect knowledge and possibly the news orientations, as well. If so, an appropriate conservative strategy involved an examination of partials between the independent variables and country knowledge with controls not only for all other independent variables, but for country favorableness, as well. Including country favorableness as a control made only an extremely marginal difference, however, affecting the partial correlations in Table 6 only slightly. With the additional control, only the association between income and Venezuelan knowledge became insignificant, and no nonsignificant correlation attained significance.

The analyses using countries as the unit of analysis provided some support for the cross-sectional implication of the knowledge-gap hypothesis and for the prediction that level of news coverage will be associated with average knowledge about a nation. The rank-order correlation between the amount of coverage of the six countries in U.S. newsmagazines, according to Pasadeos (1984), and the size of the zero-order education-knowledge association for the nations in Table 6 attained significance with a one-tailed test (rank-order $\underline{r}$ = .88; $\underline{N}$ = 6; $\underline{p} < .05$).[4] With Larson's (1984) coverage data for network television substituted for Pasadeos' content data, however, such a correlation failed to attain significance, although it remained large (rank-order $\underline{r}$ = .71). The rank-order correlation between coverage level of the six countries, based upon Pasadeos' (1984) data, and average respondent knowledge about them (from Table 1) was large (rank-order $\underline{r}$ = .77; $\underline{N}$ = 6) but did not attain significance at the .05 level with a one-tailed test. It did obtain significance with Larson's (1984) data,

however (rank-order r = .92).

Favorableness Dependent Variables

The results of data analyses involving country favorableness and using the unit of analysis of the individual survey respondent appear in Tables 5 and 7. Table 5 includes an apportionment of explained variation according to the assumed causal model for country favorableness. It indicates that although the news orientations were associated with opinions about most of the nations, the socio-demographics and knowledge were less consistent predictors. Table 7 contains the zero-order and partial correlations between independent variables and favorableness toward nations. These data suggest that news attention may contribute to favorable impressions of most nations and that exposure generally is unrelated to such opinions. Knowledge covaried with more-favorable opinions about certain countries only. Table 7 can be interpreted in the same way as Table 6.

Table 7 About Here

According to Table 7, age covaried negatively with favorableness toward Venezuela, regardless of controls, and positively with favorableness toward Britain, but only after controls for education were applied. Regardless of controls, males expressed greater liking for Japan than did females, education was a positive predictor of liking for Japan and Britain, and income covaried positively with liking for Britain. These significant correlations between education and liking dropped somewhat after controls for the news orientations and for knowledge. For these two countries, this suggests that much--but not all--of education's impact is indirect. Two other significant zero-order relationships--education with liking for the USSR and income with liking for Japan--became nonsignificant

after controls for other demographics, suggesting possible spurious associations. The zero-order relationship between education and liking for the USSR attained significance only without controls for the news orientations, suggesting that its impact may be indirect.

Among the news orientations in Table 7, attention clearly was the most important. The positive associations between the attention measures and favorableness remained significant, regardless of controls, for all countries except the Soviet Union.[5] Most of the zero-order associations between the four news exposure measures and liking for countries became nonsignificant after controls for demographics, again suggesting spurious associations. Network news exposure, however, remained negatively associated with liking for Mexico after all controls were applied. Knowledge, perhaps in part an outcome of news orientations, related positively with favorableness toward Japan and Britain, regardless of controls. Its positive zero-order association with liking for Venezuela dropped below significance after controls for socio-demographics, however.

Although the knowledge levels of individual respondents did not always covary positively with their perceived favorableness of individual countries, previous research suggested that such a relationship might exist at another unit of analysis. Based upon data in Table 1, the rank-order correlation between aggregate, average knowledge of the six countries and mean favorableness toward them was .37, but nonsignificant. It rose to .90 ($N = 5$; $p = .05$, one-tailed) after the Soviet Union was deleted as a possibly unique exception.

Discussion

The present study provided evidence consistent with both optimistic and pessimistic ideas about the impact of world news on audience knowledge

about countries. On the one hand, the results suggested that individual U.S. residents can and do acquire knowledge about the characteristics of at least some developed and developing foreign countries from news in cosmopolitan, print media and from attention to news. Results concerning possible differential effects on different social groups were consistent with pessimistic hypotheses, however. Individual-level data implied that learning about certain countries from exposure to news in cosmopolitan media may be greater to the extent that a person's education increases. Along the lines of the knowledge-gap hypothesis, country-level data suggested that relatively educated, already knowledgeable respondents are the most likely to learn from increases in news about a country. An aggregate analysis also suggested that as news coverage of a country increases, so may average audience knowledge about it. This also is consistent with the idea that people learn about countries from news. On the other hand, to the extent that individual developed societies receive more coverage than do developing countries, this finding implies audiences may learn more about developed than developing societies from news.

Evidence concerning media effects on favorableness toward countries perhaps was more consistent with an optimistic view of media impact. Data indicated that an individual's attention to news about other countries generally may contribute to more favorable impressions of them, and the study contained little evidence that exposure to world news contributes to negative impressions of either developed or developing countries. The study indicated that knowledge, some of which likely is acquired from news, may lead to more favorable impressions of certain developed countries among individual respondents. On the other hand, no comparable evidence emerged for the three developing countries in this study.

The results suggesting that individuals acquire country knowledge from exposure to cosmopolitan media, rather than from other sources, may be explained in terms of the nature of the media. By definition, cosmopolitan media contain relatively large portions of world news, in comparison to other print sources, and a variety of other studies suggest that audiences often learn little from exposure to news on television (e.g., Robinson & Levy, 1986). The negative partial correlations between exposure to general television news and knowledge of three of the countries, following controls for variables such as exposure to network news, may spuriously reflect some motivational correlate of general television viewing. On the other hand, they could also reflect an "information overload" resulting from exposure to irrelevant public-affairs facts on non-network (i.e., local) television news programs. Such an overload might inhibit memory of information about foreign countries.

The results suggesting that attention contributes to learning about countries emphasize the possible importance of audience motivation. This implies that merely increasing the amount of news information about Third-World countries may have limited effects for audiences members who are not motivated to attend to it.

In addition, the evidence suggesting that people learned about developing countries such as India and Mexico from news attention or cosmopolitan media does not permit a generalization that people also will learn about other developing societies. About two weeks before this survey was initiated, Indira Gandhi was assassinated. As a result, India had received especially heavy press coverage. Mexico also had received coverage prior to this study as a result of its economic difficulties. Formal content data reflecting lengthy time periods (e.g., Larson, 1984;

Pasadeos, 1984) demonstrate that these two countries are among the more heavily covered of developing nations in the U.S. media. On the other hand, evidence that people in the sample acquired knowledge about Venezuela from news suggests that they may also learn from the media about a large number of other developing societies. Like many Third-World societies, Venezuela ordinarily does not receive heavy coverage in the U.S. press. In Larson's (1984) study, for example, it was not among the 50 most heavily covered nations on any of the three U.S. networks.

The new world information order advocates, however, appear to be right in suggesting that as news coverage increases, so will average audience knowledge about a country. Such evidence must be interpreted with some caution, however, both because it is based upon only six countries and because of the possibility that news coverage about a country may be strongly related with information content in the schools about different nations. Education, not news, may be the crucial factor.

These two cautions also apply to the test of the knowledge-gap hypothesis. Reasons exist, however, to suspect that increases in available information about foreign countries will increase differences in the knowledge levels of educational groups. Gaziano (1982) reviewed evidence suggesting that knowledge gaps are especially likely with topics that appeal especially to persons with high socioeconomic status. Data in Table 3 indicate that for the present sample, education was associated positively with attention to news about other countries.

Contributing to knowledge gaps could an increase at higher educational levels in the impact of cosmopolitan media exposure on an individual's knowledge of India and Japan, as data here suggested. Contrasting these results and the lack of interaction for the other four nations with

findings reported by McNelly, Rush, and Bishop (1968) is interesting. The earlier study, conducted in Madison, Wisconsin, found evidence that exposure to cosmopolitan media decreased education-related differences in knowledge about country leaders. At least at that time, the intensity of world-affairs issues in Madison (which was, among other things, a major center of resistance to the Vietnam War) may have been much greater than in Tuscaloosa County in 1984. In discussing why knowledge gaps sometimes widen and at other times narrow following the introduction of mediated information, Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1975) suggested that the more intense or conflictual the issue is for a community, the lower the gap between educational strata. During ordinary circumstances, the intensity of concern about international issues in typical U.S. communities may be rather low. The patterns we found may be much more typical than is the pattern reported for the Madison data.

The strongest, and most consistent, predictor of favorable opinions about countries was attention to news about countries. The fact that attention did not covary with favorableness toward the Soviet Union suggests that the general relationship may hold for all countries except those that are perceived as military threats. Such relationships for other countries were reduced only slightly by controls in Table 6 for knowledge, indicating a possible direct effect of attention on favorableness, without knowledge as a mediator. This may occur because highly attentive people obtain a greater variety and depth of affective (including favorable) impressions from news stories than do less attentive people. The latter may pay some attention to news stories or aspects of news stories about foreign nations that are especially salient--i.e., negative--such as disasters and conflict. On the other hand, reciprocal causation may be

especially likely in relationships between attention and favorableness. Attention may enhance perceptions of favorableness, which also might lead to increased attention.

The data provided limited support for predictions that knowledge of a country will enhance favorableness. At the level of the individual survey respondent, relationships were found between knowledge and favorableness only for Great Britain and for Japan. Among the six studied here, these countries have the strongest political alliances with the United States. Therefore, knowledge may contribute to favorable impressions about a nation among individual U.S. residents to the extent that a country is aligned with the United States (cf. Nincic & Russett, 1979). That the relationship between aggregate knowledge and favorableness increased dramatically after the Soviet Union was deleted from the analysis is consistent with such an interpretation.

In summary, this study provided qualified support for optimistic hypotheses in general and for certain pessimistic hypotheses about the effects of world news. It suggests that a guarded optimism regarding the potential ability of the media to enhance international understanding may be justified.

Notes

[1]Per capita GNP and population were used because they are indicators both of two of the major characteristics of nations (Deutschmann & McNelly, 1964; Sawyer, 1967) and of the major ways people, or at least college students, differentiate countries (Wish, Deutsch, & Biener, 1970). Information about per-capita wealth and population often is included in special boxes accompanying important world-events stories. We were not anticipating, however, that people will necessarily memorize raw information about population and wealth contained in news accounts. Because we gave respondents information about the U.S. population and per-capita GNP, they could base their answers upon impressions about the relative population and wealth of the six countries. Relying upon cognitive theories, McNelly and Izcaray (1986, p. 547) theorized that the awareness of stable attributes of nations such as its population "may build up not only through memory storage of discrete facts through the media, school or other sources, but also through inferences, judgments or estimates based upon available information..." Other evidence suggests that people may use clues in news stories to form broad inferences about the characteristics of countries (cf. Perry, 1985).

[2]Of the six countries, the Soviet Union was covered the most, followed by Britain, India, Japan, Mexico, and Venezuela, according to Pasadeos' (1984) data. In Larson's (1984) study, each of the three major U.S. networks mentioned the U.S.S.R. most frequently, among the six countries, followed by Britain, Japan, Mexico, India, and Venezuela (which was not among the top 50 listed).

[3]The reliabilities of multi-item measures were assessed with Cronbach's alpha. The country knowledge reliabilities were: Japan, .60

(mean inter-item $\underline{r}$ = .29); Mexico, .61 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .30); USSR, .67 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .34); Great Britain, .68 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .35); India, .65 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .36); Venezuela, .50 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .20). Deleting any component of any of the six indices would have lowered Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha also was calculated for the attention indices, constructed from measures of attention to news about other countries in general, to news about relations between the U.S. and other countries in general, and to news about the specific country in question. These three-item reliabilities were, for the six nations: Japan, .73 (mean inter-item $\underline{r}$ = .48); Mexico, .65 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .39); USSR, .76 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .52); Britain, .74 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .50); India, .72 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .47); Venezuela, .70 (mean $\underline{r}$ = .44).

[4]According to Table 6, the education-favorableness correlations for Mexico and for Japan were identical (.44). In fact, the Mexico association was actually slightly higher than the one for Japan, and we treated it as such in the rank-order analysis.

[5]Because all the attention and favorableness items were measured on a similar 0-100 scale, we considered the possibility that these positive associations reflected a response set. Perhaps lessening this possibility, the country attention and favorableness questions were separated in the questionnaire by the 24 knowledge items, and two media reliance questions further separated the world-news attention items from those of favorableness. On the other hand, a measure, which was not included in these analyses, concerning attention to news about the local community accompanied the general attention to world-news items. We believed that consistent positive correlations between this measure and favorableness toward countries would suggest a response set because we could think of no theoretical reason to anticipate that attention to local news would covary

with favorableness toward other countries. The average correlation between a respondent's attention to local news and liking for one of the six countries was essentially .00. Only two of the six correlations attained significance at the .05 level, with a two-tailed test. One, concerning liking for Mexico, was positive (.13); the other, concerning favorableness toward the U.S.S.R., was negative (-.11). The others were: Britain, .00; Japan, -.08; Venezuela, .09; and India, -.02. This analysis therefore did not support a response-set interpretation.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Dependent Variables

	Knowledge			Favorableness		
	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N
Japan	1.86	1.13	369	64.36	25.58	348
Mexico	1.47	1.05	370	53.65	26.29	349
USSR	2.07	1.22	369	26.33	25.73	348
Great Britain	2.11	1.13	369	73.45	25.06	348
India	1.36	1.00	369	41.23	23.58	345
Venezuela	.91	.81	367	43.93	22.44	334

Note. For each country, a respondent's knowledge could range between 0 (totally incorrect responses) and 4 (totally correct responses). For favorableness, each respondent indicated an unfavorable opinion by a number close to 0 and a favorable opinion with a number close to 100.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Independent Variables

	$\bar{X}$	SD	N
Age	41.02	17.47	368
Sex	.54	.50	374
Education	12.57	2.63	374
Income	2.83	1.55	356
Newspaper Exposure	4.61	2.68	374
Television News Exposure	5.25	2.15	374
Cosmopolitan Media Exposure	.32	.47	374
Network News Exposure	3.38	2.46	370
Attention (Japan)	167.60	65.71	360
Attention (Mexico)	158.38	63.51	359
Attention (USSR)	189.01	67.24	361
Attention (Britain)	166.29	67.95	360
Attention (India)	165.27	67.32	359
Attention (Venezuela)	147.82	64.25	358

Note. See the text for details concerning the way these variables were measured.

Table 3

Zero-Order Correlations Among Independent Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Age								
2. Sex	.16							
3. Education	-.35	-.07						
4. Income	-.14	-.10	.40					
5. Newspaper Exposure	.25	.09	.23	.20				
6. Television News Exposure	.19	.07	.03	.04	.21			
7. Cosmopolitan Media Exposure	-.06	-.10	.26	.20	.25	.04		
8. Network News Exposure	.24	.11	.06	.06	.16	.52	.10	
9. Attention (Japan)	-.07	-.11	.17	.03	.07	.16	.16	.15
10. Attention (Mexico)	.00	-.03	.16	.01	.08	.14	.13	.14
11. Attention (USSR)	-.14	-.07	.22	.05	.04	.12	.18	.10
12. Attention (Britain)	-.05	-.02	.22	.08	.08	.14	.18	.15
13. Attention (India)	-.02	.04	.17	-.01	.08	.15	.13	.16
14. Attention (Venezuela)	.00	.01	.13	-.02	.03	.15	.10	.16

Table 4

Partial Correlations of Types of Country Knowledge with Independent Variables

	Knowledge of:			
	Leaders	Capitals	Population	Wealth
Age	-.03	.18*	-.16*	-.22*
Sex	-.06	-.20*	-.18*	-.12*
Education	.29*	.37*	.19*	.14*
Income	.14*	.21*	.18*	.12*
Newspaper Exposure	.09	.02	.01	.03
TV News Exposure	.02	-.13*	-.19*	.00
Cosmopolitan Media Exposure	.12*	.15*	.14*	.07
Network News Exposure	.00	.00	.08	.00
Attention	.19*	.23*	.16*	.15*

Note. Table entries are partial correlations with controls for all other independent variables. The dependent variables reflect respondent knowledge of a characteristic of six countries.

*$p < .05$, two-tailed

Table 5

Hierarchical R-Square Analysis of Perceptions of Six Countries

	Country					
	Japan	Mexico	USSR	Britain	India	Venezuela
Knowledge						
Socio-demographics	.24*	.25*	.32*	.33*	.27*	.17*
Plus New Orientations	.05*	.05*	.04*	.05*	.07*	.04*
Total	.29*	.30*	.36*	.38*	.34*	.21*
Favorableness						
Socio-demographics	.10*	.01	.02	.17*	.02	.04*
Plus News Orientations	.06*	.04*	.02	.06*	.07*	.05*
Plus Knowledge	.01*	.00	.00	.07*	.00	.00
Total	.17*	.05*	.04	.30*	.09*	.09*

Note. The socio-demographics entered included age, sex, education, and income. The news orientations used included exposure to newspapers, to television news, to cosmopolitan media, and to network television news, as well as a respondent's reported attention to news about countries.

*$p < .05$.

Table 6

Zero-order and Partial Correlations between Independent Variables and Country Knowledge Indices

		Age	Sex	Educ.	Income	NPE	TVN	CME	NTVN	Attention
Japan	1.	-.21*	-.17*	.44*	.32*	.16*	-.05	.29*	.03	.23*
	2.	-.04	-.14*	.29*	.17*	.09	.00	.18*	.03	.17*
	3.	-.07	-.12*	.25*	.14*	.06	-.05	.15*	.01	.16*
Mexico	1.	-.20*	-.19*	.44*	.36*	.13*	-.09	.28*	-.01	.17*
	2.	-.03	-.16*	.31*	.21*	.05	-.11*	.17*	-.03	.13*
	3.	-.03	-.14*	.26*	.21*	.03	-.12*	.15*	.00	.13*
USSR	1.	-.23*	-.26*	.48*	.37*	.17*	.01	.29*	.04	.25*
	2.	-.04	-.24*	.36*	.21*	.09	.02	.17*	.05	.17*
	3.	-.06	-.23*	.28*	.20*	.06	-.03	.13*	.03	.15*
Britain	1.	-.18*	-.19*	.52*	.38*	.32*	-.03	.32*	.06	.27*
	2.	.03	-.17*	.43*	.20*	.06	-.06	.19*	.03	.19*
	3.	.01	-.17*	.35*	.19*	.04	-.11*	.15*	.05	.18*
India	1.	-.06	-.11*	.46*	.36*	.25*	.00	.34*	.11*	.23*
	2.	.13*	-.09	.39*	.21*	.11*	-.05	.24*	.06	.19*
	3.	.09	-.09	.30*	.20*	.08	-.12*	.20*	.07	.18*
Venezuela	1.	-.28*	-.18*	.34*	.23*	.07	-.02	.22*	.07	.17*
	2.	-.17*	-.13*	.21*	.10*	.06	.00	.14*	.02	.16*
	3.	-.18*	-.13*	.15*	.10*	.04	-.02	.12*	.00	.16*

Note. For each country, the row numbered 1 contains the zero-order correlations; row number 2 contains partial correlations after controls for age, sex, education, and income; and row number 3 contains partial correlations with all other variables controlled. NPE stands for newspaper exposure, TVN for exposure to television news, CME represents cosmopolitan media exposure, and NTVN stands for exposure to network television news.

*$p < .05$, two-tailed.

Table 7

Zero-order and Partial Correlations between Independent Variables and Country Favorableness

		Age	Sex	Educ.	Income	NPE	TVN	CME	NTVN	ATT	KNO
Japan	1.	-.09	-.18*	.26*	.16*	.08	.02	.14*	-.01	.30*	.27*
	2.	.00	-.16*	.20*	.05	.07	.04	.06	.00	.26*	.15*
	3.	-.03	-.13*	.15*	.06	.05	.02	.02	-.04	.25*	.11*
	4.	-.02	-.12*	.11*	.04	.05	.02	.00	-.04	.24*	.11*
Mexico	1.	-.03	-.08	.02	.02	.03	.00	-.01	-.10*	.14*	.09
	2.	-.02	-.08	.00	.01	.05	.01	-.02	-.09	.14*	.07
	3.	-.02	-.07	.00	.01	.05	.05	-.04	-.12*	.15*	.06
	4.	-.02	-.06	-.02	.00	.05	.05	-.05	-.12*	.14*	.06
USSR	1.	.03	.01	.11*	-.02	.06	-.01	.06	.07	.11*	.05
	2.	.06	.00	.14*	-.07	.03	-.02	.04	.06	.09	.01
	3.	.04	.00	.10	-.07	.03	-.07	.01	.07	.09	.00
	4.	.04	.00	.09	-.07	.03	-.07	.01	.07	.09	.00
Britain	1.	.05	-.07	.34*	.29*	.14*	.05	.14*	-.07	.19*	.46*
	2.	.15*	-.06	.28*	.17*	.02	.03	.03	-.02	.27*	.31*
	3.	.13*	-.06	.22*	.18*	.02	.03	.00	-.07	.27*	.29*
	4.	.12*	-.02	.11*	.13*	.02	.06	-.04	-.08	.22*	.29*
India	1.	-.08	-.05	.01	-.08	-.07	.04	.04	.00	.25*	.01
	2.	-.06	-.04	.02	-.09	-.03	.07	.05	.02	.26*	.04
	3.	-.06	-.04	-.02	-.06	-.05	.05	.03	-.03	.25*	.00
	4.	-.06	-.04	-.01	-.06	-.04	.05	.03	-.03	.24*	.00
Venezuela	1.	-.16*	-.04	.16*	.10	-.01	.04	.07	.00	.21*	.14*
	2.	-.12*	-.01	.10	.04	.00	.08	.02	.03	.21*	.07
	3.	-.13*	-.01	.06	.05	.00	.06	.00	-.02	.20*	.03
	4.	-.12*	-.01	.06	.05	.00	.06	.00	-.02	.20*	.03

Note. For each country, the row numbered 1 contains the zero-order correlations; row number 2 contains partial correlations after controls for age, sex, education, and income; row 3 consists of partials with controls for all variables except knowledge; and row 4 contains partials with controls for all other variables. NPE stands for newspaper exposure, TVN for exposure to television news, CME represents cosmopolitan media exposure, NTVN stands for exposure to network television news, ATT stands for attention, and KNO represents knowledge about a specific country.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed